CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSIONS

The motivation for and potential benefits from improving special event planning and management relate to improvements in overall transportation system efficiency and safety. Proactive planning and management of special events increase the likelihood of these benefits.

This synthesis report compiles related information in a single source, addressing those wishing to proactively plan or manage special events. This chapter summarizes key information related to special event types, stakeholder involvement, tools and techniques, supporting guidance documentation, effectiveness of current efforts, and funding sources.

• Special Event Types

A fundamental challenge to this investigation stemmed from the basic definition of a special event as an occurrence that "abnormally increases traffic demand." This broad definition encompassed frequent events such as sporting events, musical concerts, summer-long event series, and seasonal tourist venues, as well as infrequent events such as national conventions, international summits, parades, fairs, and others.

Event examples cited by survey respondents ranged in size from 1,000 to 1.7 million patrons, in duration from a few hours to several months, and in scope of impact from local to multistate. This breadth in event size, duration, and impact combined with the dynamic nature of special events challenges the ability to concisely categorize special events into groups that share common characteristics and present similar challenges in planning and management. These factors subsequently challenge the ability to develop uniform procedures for special event planning and management.

Although the categorization of special events in this synthesis report was based on the frequency of the event, the diversity of special events would allow many different classifications. Events may be categorized as to the type of venue (e.g., fixed or temporary, single or multiple) or by the event time and duration, scope of impact, and even area type (rural or urban). Because of the noted variability in special event type, no two events are identical and each event therefore must be planned and managed independently.

• Stakeholder Involvement

Primary stakeholders in the special event planning and management process include law enforcement agencies, fire departments, transportation departments, the media, event organizers, planning and political bodies, and the military. A total of 29 different stakeholders were identified as having a potential role in the special event planning and management process. Agency and jurisdictional involvement varied by size, type, and location of the event. As noted previously, special events are often unique with respect to their characteristics. On such occasions, a fixed, predefined set of stakeholders cannot be established. The list of stakeholders provided in this report represents only a good starting point for potential stakeholder involvement. For example, stakeholders related to event security became more crucial following the events of September 11, 2001.

Despite the significant number of stakeholders that could be involved in the special event planning and management process, relatively consistent interaction among the key stakeholders was reported. A "champion" was nearly always responsible for ensuring this interaction, although the affiliation of the champion varied across survey responses. The affiliation of the champion also varied depending on the size, type, and location of the special event, with the most common being department of transportation personnel, event organizers, and law enforcement agencies. The most common forum for interaction among all stakeholders was reported as interagency/interjurisdictional pre- and post-event meetings.

• Tools and Techniques

An extensive array of special event planning and management tools and techniques are in use or planned for use. In almost all cases, a combination of tools and techniques are employed that address (1) motorist information, (2) traffic management, and (3) travel demand management needs.

Common motorist information tools and techniques include variable message signs, highway advisory radio, media partnerships, and pre-event information campaigns. Variable message signs and highway advisory radio provide excellent means to communicate with motorists on the road during ingress and egress periods. Pre-event informational campaigns inform motorists before a special event, when they can make the most critical changes to

their travel plans. Media partnerships can be used for both pretrip and en-route information dissemination, with television and print media providing pretrip information and radio providing en-route information.

Predominant traffic management tools and techniques include the use of traffic control devices, patrols, electronic surveillance, signalization, and geometric modifications. Common traffic control devices include traffic cones, portable traffic signs, and portable traffic signals. Many different types of patrols, such as law enforcement motorcycle patrols, law enforcement service patrols, non-law enforcement service patrols, traffic management teams, and aircraft patrols are used. Each has a different level of authority, mobility, and coverage area. Electronic loop detection, video and closed-circuit television, and traffic management centers make up the electronic surveillance tools. Signalization techniques include signal systems that have programmed timing plans, traffic-responsive signal systems that allow dynamic adjustment of timing plans, and ramp metering for freeway use. Common geometric modifications include temporary lane closures, reversible or contraflow lanes, or even major capacity improvements such as adding lanes, building new roads, or installing additional interchanges or intersections.

Travel demand management tools and techniques most commonly are categorized as economic or preferential incentives and disincentives for alternate mode use and alternate travel times, alternate routes, parking strategies, and major transit improvements. Economic incentives for alternate mode use include charging different parking rates for single-occupancy vehicles and high-occupancy vehicles. Preferential incentives for alternate mode use include having high-occupancy vehicle lanes or simply improving access for people who bicycle or walk. Parking strategies include parking management systems to monitor parking vacancies to reduce trolling times or park-and-ride lots to simply reduce the need for on-site parking and reduce the overall demand near the event site. Major transit improvements include adding ticket lines and booths at transit terminals or actually adding transit stations near the event venue.

- **Supporting Guidance Documentation**

Limited formal guidance documentation to support special event planning and management was found; only seven states responded affirmatively that they have such formalized guidance. Of those that did respond affirmatively and provided examples, there were differences in the content and focus of the guidance documents, depending on the lead organization. Law enforcement-initiated documents focused more on general public safety and enforcement duties and less on traffic control activities during special event times. The most common motivation for the creation of such guidance documentation was to strengthen coordination of resources to help eliminate redundancy and confusion. The stakeholders who helped in the creation of these documents were typically from either transportation or law enforcement agencies. One important aspect uncovered was the need for updatability and flexibility, because special events are dynamic and changing conditions that may create unforeseen traffic problems.

- **Effectiveness of Current Efforts**

Efforts to quantitatively evaluate the effectiveness of special event planning and management activities have been limited; only 1 survey respondent of 36 indicated that formal performance measures were predefined to evaluate efforts. Only eight survey respondents reported collecting data in support of planning and management efforts. For larger-scale events, the use of traffic simulation was not uncommon.

Qualitative assessments of special event planning and management efforts were easier to obtain. When considering their own agency's performance, the majority of respondents indicated being satisfied with their agency's level of effort toward special event planning and management. Externally, the common challenge expressed related to communication and cooperation with other stakeholders. This common theme stresses the need to develop formal interagency communication, establish communication protocols, and develop formal guidance documentation.

- **Funding Sources**

Common sources of funding for special event planning and management at the federal level include the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ), the FTA, and the FHWA. At the state level, the most common funding source cited by survey respondents for special event planning and management was from state departments of transportation. Transportation department operating budgets have been used to support personnel, traditional traffic control devices, and equipment such as variable message signs. Transportation department operating budgets have also reportedly been used to provide 20% matching funds for CMAQ and FTA grants. Private partners and event organizers also provide funding for planning and managing special events, although at varying levels. At the lowest level, an event organizer may be required to pay permit fees to cover the cost of reviewing the event request and issuing the permit. In other instances, event organizers may be responsible for all or a portion of the special event costs.

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